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NICEC
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR CAREER EDUCATION AND COUNSELLING

NICEC STATEMENT

The Fellows of NICEC agreed the following statement in 2010.

'The National Institute for Career Education and Counselling (NICEC) was originally founded as a research institute in 1975. It now plays the role of a learned society for reflective practitioners in the broad field of career education, career guidance/counselling and career development. This includes individuals whose primary role relates to research, policy, consultancy, scholarship, service delivery or management. NICEC seeks to foster dialogue and innovation between these areas through events, networking, publications and projects.

NICEC is distinctive as a boundary-crossing network devoted to career education and counselling in education, in the workplace, and in the wider community. It seeks to integrate theory and practice in career development, stimulate intellectual diversity and encourage transdisciplinary dialogue. Through these activities, NICEC aims to develop research, inform policy and enhance service delivery.

Membership and fellowship are committed to serious thinking and innovation in career development work. Membership is open to all individuals and organisations connected with career education and counselling. Fellowship is an honour conferred by peer election and signals distinctive contribution to the field and commitment to the development of NICEC's work. Members and Fellows receive the NICEC journal and are invited to participate in all NICEC events.

NICEC does not operate as a professional association or commercial research institute, nor is it organisationally aligned with any specific institution. Although based in the UK, there is a strong international dimension to the work of NICEC and it seeks to support reflective practice in career education and counselling globally.'

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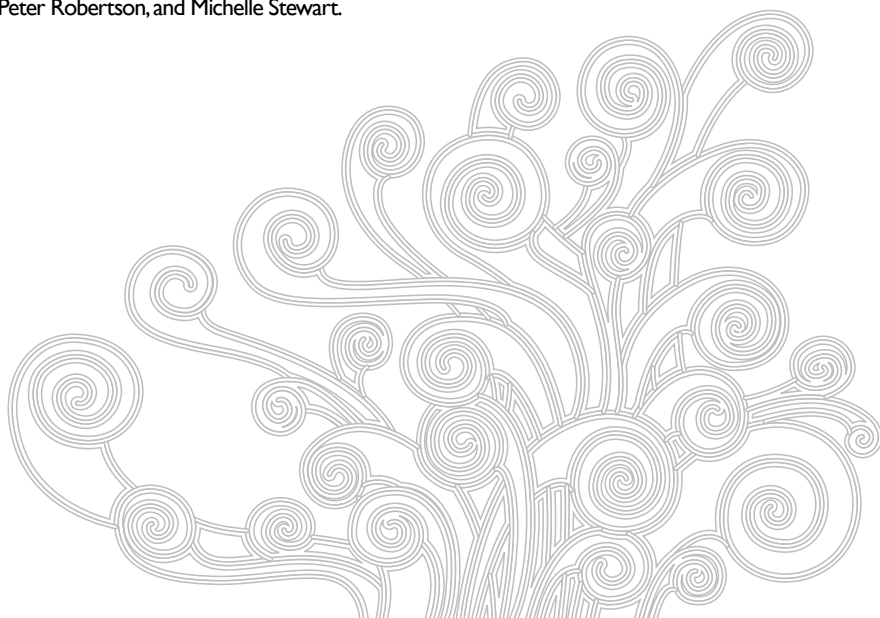
TITLE

The official title of the journal for citation purposes is *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling* (Print *ISSN 2046-1348; online* ISSN 2059-4879). It is widely and informally referred to as 'the NICEC journal'. Its former title was *Career Research and Development: the NICEC Journal*, ISSN 1472-6564, published by CRAC, and the final edition under this title was issue 25. To avoid confusion we have retained the numbering of editions used under the previous title.

AIMS AND SCOPE

The NICEC journal publishes articles on the broad theme of career development in any context including:

- Career development in the workplace: private and public sector, small, medium and large organisations, private practitioners.
- Career development in education: schools, colleges, universities, adult education, public career services.
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It is designed to be read by individuals who are involved in career development-related work in a wide range of settings including information, advice, counselling, guidance, advocacy, coaching, mentoring, psychotherapy, education, teaching, training, scholarship, research, consultancy, human resources, management or policy. The journal has a national and international readership.

Contents

Overview of this issue

Welcome to the October 2018 issue of the NICEC journal. The articles below were contributed in response to an open call for papers. It is once again a pleasure to report that innovative, creative, and engaging scholarship is thriving in our field.

Peter Plant, Inger Marie Bakke and **Lyn Barham** get the ball rolling with a timely call for 'geronto guidance' for older people. They are particularly interested in the support that is available around retirement arguing it is currently something of a blind spot in terms of a genuinely lifelong guidance system.

The second article from **Lisa Law** continues the theme of age and change. It uses an action research strategy to evaluate the delivery of a workshop for older students at a UK university. The workshop demonstrates a creative and successful example of practice for this key client group.

Charles Jackson argues for the value of career surveys drawing from his work with trainee doctors and medical students. The surveys, it is suggested, highlight the importance of the human touch and talking directly with other people about career issues. The article finishes with a set of conclusions about the value of career surveys.

Steve Mowforth extends the use of survey to small-scale qualitative research with generation z students at a British university. He argues that contemporary scene has moved on from attitudes and beliefs associated with what he terms the industrial state.

Julia Yates reports on some contemporary techniques in career coaching. These include visual tools, role play tools, possible selves technique, passengers on the bus technique, pre-designed frameworks, and client-generated maps.

Debra Osborn and **V. Casey Dozier** argue for the value of cognitive information processing theory in relation to interventions. They provide two case studies to illustrate the approach.

Ingrid Bårdsdatter Bakke, Erik Haug and **Tristram Hooley** provide a timely update on guidance developments in Norway. They propose an innovative approach to combining face-to-face and online guidance based on career learning and instructional design.

Our final article by **Cathy Brown** and **Tracey Wond** is devoted to the topic of career capitals. Two contrasting conceptions of capital are critically assessed. Drawing from this, they propose some ideas for the development of career capital using a case study.

This issue concludes with a book review of *Graduate Employability in Context: Theory, Research and Debate* edited by Ciaran Burke and Fiona Christie.

Phil McCash, Editor

Career coaching tools: Evidence-based techniques for practice

Julia Yates

Recent theoretical and empirical developments have led to a deeper understanding of the complexity of career decisions and the cognitive processes that underpin them, and numerous techniques have been developed aimed at supporting clients struggling with this complexity. This article introduces a number of evidence-based techniques available to career practitioners, examining the theories which underpin them and the evidence for their effectiveness within career practice. The paper offers a framework of techniques and describes a number of tools which have been shown to add value to career conversations.

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Introduction

Building on the insights from 20th century scholars, our understanding of how people choose their careers and navigate their career paths has advanced yet further over recent decades. The process of career development is now understood to be even more complex and multi layered than was previously imagined.

Contemporary career theory conceptualises career decisions as holistic, and inevitably influenced by the different roles we play (Blustein, 1997; Super, 1980), the other people we are connected to (Amundson, Borgen, Iaquinta, Butterfield, & Koert, 2010), and a range of other aspects of our lives (Savickas et al., 2009). Career choices are understood to be decisions about identity (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010; Meijers & Lengelle, 2012) and are therefore bound up with gender, class, race, sexuality, religion and community alongside psychological factors such as meaning, interests, values and skills. Compounding this complexity is the growing tranche of evidence that

our decisions are heavily and inevitably influenced by non-conscious cognitive processes (Krieshok, Black & McKay, 2009; Redekopp, 2017). Alongside these personal issues, the fast pace of change in the labour market renders career development yet more convoluted, as individuals face the ongoing, lifelong challenge of negotiating their way through an ever changing landscape (Savickas et al., 2009).

Our understanding of career development has thus progressed in the last twenty years, yet at the heart of one to one career guidance practice lie models which were developed in the 20th century. The approaches to guidance which have dominated practice are grounded in Rogers' person centred philosophy. Bedford (1982), Egan (1975) and Ali and Graham (1996) for example, whose models of guidance are all widely used today, advocate a style of career guidance interview based on Rogers' core conditions for therapeutic change which include a focus on empathy, congruence and listening (Rogers, 1957).

There is evidence which supports this sustained commitment to the person-centred philosophy. Research from the fields of counselling and coaching indicates that the specific approach taken by a practitioner is often less important to the therapeutic outcomes than the quality of the working alliance between the client and practitioner (de Haan, Grant, Burger, & Eriksson, 2016; McKenna & Davis, 2009). From this it could be inferred that the exact nature of the intervention does not much matter as long as the practitioner and client have a good relationship and a shared understanding of the aims of the session. Yet evidence of the outcomes of career guidance indicates that specific techniques and approaches do confer additional and differential benefits on clients (Brown et al., 2003; Whiston, Li, Mitts & Wright, 2017). It seems timely, in the light of the new developments in our understanding of career development, to reflect on the

range of contemporary techniques and tools which career practitioners can draw on to complement and supplement the person-centred bedrock of career practice.

Tools for Career Practice

Techniques have been developed both within the career development field and beyond it, and tools devised and honed within areas such as coaching (Yates, 2013) and counselling (Reid, 2015) hold promise for effective career practice. Many of these techniques have a strong evidence base that supports their inclusion in career conversations, and in the section below, I introduce a number of tools which have been shown to add value in a career context. The techniques can be grouped within three categories. First there are the tools that help clients to uncover their *unknown knowns* and allow them to capitalise on the information stored below the level of consciousness. Then there are techniques which help clients to think *beyond the barriers* and can help people who are struggling to navigate their way past the challenges they face. Finally, there are *structured frameworks* which can help people to make sense of the complexities of their situations.

Uncovering the unknown knowns

In 2002, Donald Rumsfeld, then the Secretary of Defense for the US described three kinds of knowledge: *known knowns, known unknowns* and *unknown unknowns*. This has been quoted widely, but alongside these three categories, there is an obvious fourth, which has had considerably less traction. Unknown knowns are elements of knowledge that we have, but are unaware of: the information is stored within our minds, but is so difficult to recall that we are not aware it exists (Žižek, 2006).

Unknown known information is stored below the level of consciousness. Freud described a space in between the conscious and the unconscious which he described as the *pre-conscious* (Freud, 1915; Zepf, 2011). He suggested that we could access this knowledge through focusing attention and using language to help clarify thoughts. The use of language is important because it is thought that pre-conscious information is stored in the form of images, and it is through

describing the images that thoughts are brought into the conscious stores and clarified.

Stored in the pre-conscious are ideas which may be relevant to career choice, and uncovering this information can help clients to make more informed decisions. The information might relate to the clients themselves - their own aspirations or hopes and dreams for the future, or might concern jobs or other opportunities. The information can be difficult to access, in part because our clients do not realise that they already have the information and in part because it is stored in the form of images, so needs to be translated into words before it can be fully analysed. The pictorial nature of this store of information gives us some suggestions for techniques that can help clients to access the information.

Visual tools

The field of art therapy has given us an understanding of the visual exercises that have a positive influence, and an insight into the nature of their impact. Two of the most straightforward art exercises are based on drawing and collage. There are three stages to these kinds of interventions. Clients are first asked to create an image, which they can work on within the career session or at home. The client could be asked to produce something which reflects their current situation or could create a picture which reflects an appealing future. This stage in itself can be rewarding for clients as they become absorbed in their task and feel the satisfaction of creating a tangible product. The client is then invited to reflect on their creation, question their artistic choices, and consider what meaning the image holds for them. Finally, the client and practitioner discuss, together, what light their image might shed on their current situation or future aspirations. Exercises such as this have been shown to increase clients' general psychological well-being and to enhance their self-awareness (Coiner & Kim, 2011)

Role play tools

Another set of tools makes use of empathy and imagination, and offers clients alternative routes to uncovering their unknown knowns. One such technique makes use of imaginary conversations. Clients who are struggling to make a career decision are asked to imagine the advice that a particular role

model would give them. In using an imagined role model as a conduit for this advice, the clients are able to free up their own thought processes and see things more clearly. The idea of 'imagined interactions' has been studied in depth in the literature (Honeycutt, 2002, 2008). These imagined conversations provide a different view of people's reality, and make use of symbols and visual images to provide an alternative perspective.

These two kinds of techniques, both firmly established within art therapy and drama therapy, can offer alternative cognitive pathways to the information stored in the pre-conscious. Once this information has been identified and articulated, the client is able to scrutinise and judge it, and then make a conscious decision about its value and relevance to their career choices.

The second set of tools can help clients to think beyond their barriers.

Thinking beyond barriers

The questions that our clients face are often both complex and challenging. Sometimes, clients can get stuck because the barriers seem insurmountable. These barriers can cloud their thinking and stifle their optimism and creativity. The barriers can be internal or external, real or imaginary, and they can have a detrimental impact on people's ability to set goals for themselves, or to find the motivation to put their plans into action. In order to free themselves from the constraints of these barriers clients can either take a cognitive leap forward in order to look past the problem, or can address the barriers head on.

Looking past the problem

Some techniques enable clients to fast forward to a point in time in the future. This allows them to mentally leapfrog over the barriers which they have identified and imagine a time in the future when their problems have been solved. Rather than working forwards chronologically from the present to the future, they are invited to work backwards, starting with a positive future and retracing their steps back to the present. This retrospective approach invokes their creative imagination to identify effective solutions. Two examples of this are possible selves, and the miracle question.

The idea of possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) offers a well-evidenced technique which has been shown to help clients with goal-setting and motivation (Strauss, Griffin & Parker, 2012). It involves inviting clients to imagine different versions of themselves in the future and then render their imagined future identities as elaborate and vivid as possible. This mental image and the associated emotion which they are encouraged to 'pre-experience' have a long-lasting motivating effect on their behaviour. The miracle question, taken from solution focused coaching (de Jong & Berg, 2002) asks clients to imagine that one night, whilst they are sleeping, a miracle happens, and their problem is solved. Clients are invited to describe the morning after the miracle, and to identify the feelings, thoughts and behaviour which might first alert them to the fact that the miracle has taken place. They imagine the day unfolding and are asked to describe the way that their new life is revealed to them step by step, with a focus on the observable behavioural changes they can identify. The miracle question has been shown to help with goal setting, and increasing hope and optimism, and has been described as an approach which could offer a positive contribution to career practice (Burwell & Chen, 2006; Miller, 2017).

Dealing with the barriers

An alternative to the idea of by-passing the barriers, is to try to minimise their impact. One approach, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT – pronounced as a single word) (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson 2009) offers techniques to help clients to accept their negative thoughts, and ensure that the thoughts do not prevent them from pursuing their goals. The *passengers on the bus* metaphor is one such technique (Flaxman, Bond & Livheim, 2013). In this a client is asked to imagine that they are driving a bus which symbolises their life journey. The bus is filled with passengers who represent the client's thoughts and feelings. Some of the passengers (thoughts and feelings) are negative and unruly and are trying to distract the driver (the client) and re-route the bus towards a different destination. Clients are invited to think about how they might want to deal with the passengers, and how they could ignore them and carry on with their journeys. Clients are then encouraged to apply this thinking to their real lives, identifying strategies for accepting the presence of their negative

thoughts and feelings, but finding a way to maintain a focus on their goals despite the negativity. ACT interventions have been shown to reduce anxiety, increase well-being and innovative thinking (Bond & Bunce, 2003; Öst, 2014).

The final set of tools introduced here offer clients a mechanism to help them structure their thoughts.

A structure for chaos

The complexities of the labour market, our lives and the career choices that we make can sometimes overwhelm our cognitive resources (Sweller, 1994). Numerous techniques exist to offer frameworks or systems which allow clients to structure their knowledge, and thus make it more manageable. Many of these tools are pre-designed, and clients can use frameworks that others have devised to help them to organise their own thoughts. Other approaches can offer clients the chance to devise their own frameworks. Perhaps inevitably, using these client-generated frameworks is more challenging both for practitioners, and for clients, but perhaps equally inevitably, they also offer more value as they stretch clients' thinking and lead to a framework that is tailor made.

Pre-designed frameworks

One pre-designed framework which has gained some devoted followers is known as the values-in-action inventory of strengths (Park, Peters & Seligman, 2004). It consists of 24 separate strengths which have been identified using data from thousands of participants the world over and which are grouped into six virtues: wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence. The strengths cover a wide range of qualities including those which go beyond the usual list of work-related skills, and include humour, love of learning and zest. Clients can access an online questionnaire, or can use strengths cards to help them to identify their signature strengths. Finding a job in which key strengths are used every day has been shown to have a significant impact on job satisfaction (Peterson & Park, 2006; Mongrain & Anselmo-Matthews, 2012), so the use of strengths to help clients to examine their career choices could add considerable value to career conversations.

Client-generated maps

The Depth Orientate Values Extraction is an approach which facilitates clients to identify their own values through working with their interests (Colozzi, 2003). Examining interests can be revealing as leisure activities are (usually) pursued voluntarily and so can be a transparent window to authentic values. Colozzi offers a structure for a conversation which can lead clients to identify what they enjoy about their leisure activities, and this can reveal their implicit values. He suggests that clients should first identify ten or so recent occasions when they have really enjoyed themselves. They then need to identify what it was that gave them pleasure. This stage is challenging as clients need to be quite analytical and go beyond 'it was fun' and 'it was interesting' to identify exactly what made it fun and interesting. Clients are then asked to pick out some common themes from their analysis, and finally reflect on whether these themes could help them think about their future choices. Values have been shown to play an important part in both career conversations (Whiston et al., 2017) and job satisfaction (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005) and this technique facilitates clients to work out what really matters to them.

Conclusion

The techniques in this paper come from a wide range of theoretical traditions, including social psychology (possible selves), behavioural science (ACT), psychotherapy (art-based approaches) and positive psychology (strengths). This multi-disciplinary approach to career practice responds to an important call in the literature (Dany, 2014; Khapova & Arthur, 2011). Research into career development and into therapeutic interventions has moved on apace over the last decades, building on the understanding from the more traditional body of career theories. We are well aware that 'career' as our clients experience it is multi-faceted, incorporating psychological, sociological, economic and political influences so career practice which is restricted to a narrow selection of 20th century approaches may not be fit for purpose. We will serve our clients well if we can capitalise on the up to date ideas which have been generated both within our discipline and beyond to offer our clients the best support we can.

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Further details of these and a range of other techniques can be found in: Yates, J. (2018). *The Career Coaching Toolkit*, London: Routledge.